

“I hope to be able to send you soon a detailed account of this experiment, which is, so far as I am aware, the first successful one, and which will put Dr. Meyer’s discovery as to the sexual differences of *Eclectus* beyond any doubt.”

The following papers were read :—

1. On a new Species of *Eclectus* from the Timorlaut Islands.  
By A. B. MEYER, M.D., C.M.Z.S., Director Royal Zoological Museum, Dresden.

[Received October 18, 1881.]

In a collection of birdskins which Mr. Riedel, the well-known Dutch Resident formerly at Gorontalo and Timor Kupang, and now at Amboina, has recently sent to the Dresden Museum from the islands of Sumba, Timor, and the smaller ones to the east as far as Aru, and on which I hope to be able soon to publish some notes, I immediately perceived, when unpacking them, the skin of a red *Eclectus* which differs from all others known to me.

It may be described thus :—

ECLECTUS RIEDELI, sp. nov.

Fœm. *Capite et collo coccineis; dorso, uropygio, supracaudalibus, tectricibus alarum, remigibus secundariis externe, subalaribus minoribus, pectore et abdomine rubro-puniceis; margine alarum et pogonio externo remigum primariorum cyaneis; subcaudalibus caudæque apice pulchre flavis; cauda supra rubropunicea, subtus flava, basin versus aurorescente; rostro pedibusque nigris. Long. tot. circa 360 millim., al. 220, caud. circa 130, rostri 30 (culmin. 40), tarsi 20.*

*Hab. in ins. Timorlaut: Cera.*

Although no sex has been assigned to the specimen by the hunter, I nevertheless, judging from analogy, do not doubt the least that it is the female of a green *Eclectus* which still remains to be discovered; besides, on raising the red feathers, green spots and greenish tints come into appearance here and there.

*Eclectus riedeli* resembles *E. cornelia*, Bp. (P. Z. S. 1849, pl. xi.), with the exception of the tail and under tail-coverts, which are rather those of *E. roratus* (P. L. S. Müll.) female (*E. grandis* auct.), with the difference only that the underparts of the tail are more yellowish than reddish. Its specific difference from the last-named bird is obvious at a glance, there being no violet at all on the back and belly in *E. riedeli*; and the same character distinguishes it from *E. cardinalis* (Bodd.) female, as well as from *E. pectoralis* (P. L. S. Müll.) female (*E. linnæi* auct.), from which last species it stands furthest apart. The red hue of the head differs somewhat from that in all three species named. I cannot compare this hue with that of *E. cornelia*, of which no specimen is within my reach; and as to the

hue of a colour the consultation of a plate is not satisfactory. The red colour of the back agrees rather well with that of *E. cardinalis*. The bill of *E. riedeli* is weaker than those of *E. pectoralis* fem. and *E. roratus* fem., even smaller than that of *E. cardinalis*. *E. riedeli*, therefore, proves to be a well-defined species, in the same sense as the other species of the genus, viz. an insular variation from one and the same stock.

Good luck having put into my hands a new species from a locality which has been suspected to be the habitat of *E. cornelia*, I am obliged to give way concerning my doubts as to the specific value of the last-named bird (see 'Verhandlungen der k.-k. zool.-bot. Gesellschaft zu Wien, 1874, p. 184), and now suppose that its habitat will be somewhere in these eastern parts of the Malay Archipelago. Unfortunately, only one specimen of *E. riedeli* has been sent by Mr. Riedel, and no other *Eclectus* at all from any of the dozen or more islands from which he forwarded specimens. I do not suppose that *E. westermanni*, Bp., is the male of *E. riedeli*, as the size of these two birds appears to differ; but this question can only be decided when actually green specimens arrive from Cera or its close neighbourhood. After this discovery of a red *Eclectus* without blue or violet on the breast, belly, and back, not in captivity, but directly from the forest, I am rather inclined now to look on *E. westermanni* also as a good species (see *l. s. c.*).

The island of Cera, or Cerra, or Sejrak, belongs to the Tenimber or Timorlaut group, and is situated on the west of the larger island of Timorlaut, only separated from it by a small sea-arm. The small islands to the west of Timorlaut are celebrated for their tortoise-shell; and therefore dealers from Amboina and Banda go there every year; Cera has about 2500 inhabitants. I mention these data, which are not generally known to ornithologists, in the hope that some one, travelling in the far east, may profit by them and make a trip to Cera from Amboina or Banda.

The species of *Eclectus* which occurs on the nearest island is *E. pectoralis*, on Kei (about 150 miles distant from Cera, the shortest distance between the Timorlaut islands and Kei being only about 90 miles), the female of which (*E. linnæi* auct.) differs most considerably from *E. riedeli*. We now know five forms of red *Eclecti*, which differ from another much more than do the green males—a very interesting fact, showing that, if variation occurs at all in consequence of insular isolation, both sexes are not always liable to it in the same degree. It is to be hoped that we may soon learn more about *E. westermanni*, *E. cornelia*, and *E. riedeli*, and about other links of the chain, if such still exist. The more forms known the more instructive appears the insular variation and the extraordinary sexual diversity of this genus. Thanks to the researches of Dr. Krukenberg of Heidelberg, we now know that the yellow pigment (zoofulvin) which produces the green colour of the male *Eclecti* is chemically the same as that which gives the yellow colour to the under tail-coverts and the apical parts of the tail of *E. roratus* female (*E. grandis* auct.), and that the red colour of the female

*Electi* is produced by the same pigment (ara-red) as the red which adorns the breast of the male *Electi* (see Dr. C. Fr. W. Krukenberg, 'Vergl. physiologische Studien,' ii. p. 161 *seq.*, Heidelberg, 1881; and A. B. Meyer, 'Mitth. d. ornith. Vereins zu Wien,' p. 83 *seq.*, 1881)—facts which not only do not contradict the statement that the green and red *Electi* sexually belong together, but directly support it. They, besides, give a clue to the occurrence of yellow in the females and of red in the males: in the first case the male influence comes into appearance in the female dress, in the second the female influence in the male dress. Only a partial mixture of colour takes place in *Electus*, whereas in the majority of birds the mixture of male and female characters is a more complete one.

But, however this may be, the doubts which some ornithologists still entertain as to the "theory" promulgated by myself in 1874, will finally vanish only after successful breeding-experiments in captivity. Our hopes that this may be soon accomplished are founded on the fact that Dr. Frenzel, of Freiberg in Saxony, has already succeeded twice so far that two couples of young *Electi* have been developed in the eggs, ready to emerge, when they died from unknown causes. These four specimens are now preserved in spirit in the Dresden Museum. But Dr. Frenzel informs me that now again his pair (green and red) of *E. pectoralis* are sitting vigorously on fertilized eggs<sup>1</sup>. If he succeeds in rearing up the young ones, we shall have the pleasure of observing the change of plumage from red into green, or of stating that the sexual difference of colour exists from the beginning—a question which is, as far as I see, not yet finally settled.

2. A Note on the Genera *Schœnicola* and *Catriscus*. By R. BOWDLER SHARPE, F.L.S., F.Z.S., &c., Department of Zoology, British Museum.

[Received October 21, 1880.]

During the last two years a great deal of interest has been shown in India with respect to Jerdon's *Schœnicola platyura*, a little Reed-bird, which was described by him as *Timalia platyura* (Madr. Journ. xiii. p. 170), and was afterwards made the type of the genus *Schœnicola* by Blyth (J. A. S. Beng. xxxiii. p. 374). The typical specimen was lost; and the bird remained unidentified for years, merely receiving a short notice, in 1863, from Jerdon in his 'Birds of India' (ii. p. 73). In 1878, however, Mr. Frank Bourdillon met with the species in Southern Travancore, as recorded by Mr. Hume in the 7th volume of 'Stray Feathers' (p. 37). Again, in Capt. Legge's 'Birds of Ceylon,' reference is made to a specimen which had been since 1854 lying undetermined in a box in the British Museum; but Capt. Legge (somewhat inconsistently, in my opinion) only gave it a place in his work in a foot-note. There is not the slightest reason for believing that the specimen in question is not a genuine Ceylonese skin,

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Frenzel's letter above, p. 916.